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## Senate

(Legislative day of Tuesday, January 3, 2023)

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mrs. MURRAY).

### PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, the Earth belongs to You and everything in it. We look to You in every season of life's pilgrimage because You remain the champion that initiates and perfects our faith.

Lord, help us to maximize today's possibilities with humble and grateful hearts. Forgive our past faults and failures and empower us to press forward with faith toward a productive tomorrow.

Bless our lawmakers and the members of their staffs. May the words of their lips and the meditations of their hearts bring glory to You. Let not life's weariness or this world's confusion rob them of their trust in You.

We pray in Your sovereign Name. Amen.

### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

### MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business, with

Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. WARNOCK. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WARNOCK). Without objection, it is so ordered.

### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

### RECOGNIZING THE NEW PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

Mr. SCHUMER. Now, Mr. President, just a few moments before you assumed the Chair, Senator MURRAY opened the Senate as President pro tempore for the first time. Kudos, congratulations.

She is a great, great Member. She is the chair of Appropriations and now PPT, and it was a wonderful thing to see her open up the Senate for the first time as PPT. So congratulations to Senator MURRAY and to all of us for having such a good President pro tempore.

### HOUSE REPUBLICAN AGENDA

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, now on to business, in no time at all, the House Republicans are off to the rockiest start of any new majority in recent memory. Have you ever seen anything like this? We aren't even a month into the new Congress, and already the House GOP has shown the

American people they have been consumed by chaos, paralyzed by division, and held captive by the most extreme elements of their conference.

On their first day of voting—the very first day—House Republicans decided their first order of business as the new majority was to pass legislation making it easier for ultrarich tax cheats to escape accountability. Amazing. That is their first thing. At the same time, as they did that, they would blow a hole—a \$100 billion hole—in the deficit because according to CBO, the amount of money brought into the Federal Treasury by closing some of these loopholes against tax cheats—very wealthy tax cheats—would far exceed the expenditure made for the new IRS agents. The deficit would come down if we passed this legislation. For all the talk on the other side about we have got to bring down the deficit—not when it comes to closing loopholes of the ultrarich and corporations that pay a smaller percentage than most Americans, uh-uh. Wow. Apparently, cutting taxes for megacorporations and the 1 percent was not enough for Republicans 5 years ago. They did that in the Trump tax bill. Now they want to make things even easier for tax cheats.

Then, a few days later, the House Republicans doubled down on their war on women by passing measures that will undermine women's freedom of choice.

Make no mistake, these bills will never see the light of day in the Senate. But again, the extreme—the extreme—MAGA fringe element of the Republican Party seems to be controlling the whole entity. We hope that doesn't last for long.

We in the Senate will serve as an extinguishable firewall and stop the anti-woman, anti-health, anti-choice bills in their tracks. So, right off the bat, the House Republicans are showing us exactly whose corner they are

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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in: the ultrarich and the fringe elements of their party.

Now, make no mistake, Democrats want to work with a competent and capable Republican Party wherever possible to make life better for average Americans. Democrats are united in this commitment because we all saw firsthand how bipartisanship was the key to so many of last year's successes. Later today, in fact, I will join President Biden, Leader Jeffries, and a number of Senate and House colleagues precisely to talk about how we can turn our unity into action to help the American people.

House Republicans, meanwhile, seem trapped in a cycle of extremism so powerful that now they are even giving proposals like a national sales tax—a national sales tax—serious consideration. According to some House Republicans, House leadership has agreed to give GOP radicals a vote on a 30-percent national sales tax on all goods across the board. That means, right now, with inflation finally beginning to drop, Republicans are looking to make Americans pay 30 percent more for everything they buy.

Look, if Republicans want to have a debate with Democrats on their national sales tax bill, we will be happy to have it. We would love to hear Republicans explain to the American people why it is a good idea to send prices skyrocketing on everything from cars to groceries, to diapers, and everything in between. We would love to hear Republicans tell seniors why their expenses would go up by a third after they have spent a lifetime for retirement. And we would love to hear Republicans explain to middle-class families why their taxes would increase by thousands of dollars a year while the ultrarich see their taxes go down. If Republicans want to push this terrible proposal, they are welcome to make their case. Make our day.

I think many within the Republicans own ranks recognize that a national sales tax is an especially dimwitted idea. Even Grover Norquist, whose ideas on tax are far away from most Americans—and he is one of the most conservative voices out there—called it “a terrible idea.”

Even Steve Forbes said this would make the average new home in this country cost \$100,000 more.

Young families, do you want to buy a home? Some of our Republican friends want to add \$100,000 to the cost of buying that home, and of course it would raise bills by thousands more. And yet—yet—despite the insanity of this idea, the House Republican leadership is bent to the MAGA wing of the Republican Party and have promised a vote.

If this is how House Republicans want to spend their time—taxing middle-class families, attacking women's freedom of choice, giving cover to tax cheats—be our guest.

Once again, this is the central quandary of the new Republican majority.

By bending to the demands of the MAGA hard right, Speaker MCCARTHY has guaranteed that Republicans will have to constantly cater to the whims of the MAGA wing at the expense of the American people.

Now, we will be a firewall against all of these things, and I am sure the American people are glad that we have a Democratic majority in the Senate to stop some of these rather insane proposals because when extremists run the show, as seems to be happening in the House, it makes it nearly impossible to have serious-minded, constructive conversations on the big issues that matter.

No issue, of course, will matter more in the coming months than raising the debt ceiling. Over the next few months, we are going to hear more about the debt ceiling in Congress, maybe more than any other issue. But the matter is very simple. If the United States is allowed to default on its debt for the first time, the consequences will be severe and every single American will pay the price.

A default means interest rates will spike on everything from car loans to credit cards, to mortgages. It means that Americans will have to pay thousands of dollars more on regular expenses. Homes will lose their value. Homes, the average middle-class person's piece of the rock that they struggled and saved for so that they could own a home and so they don't have to pay rent and can pay a mortgage where they get equity—those homes will lose their value if we default, God forbid, on the debt because mortgage interest rates will soar. That means people will have less money to pay for a home and supply and demand just sits. The price goes down. The value goes down.

Meanwhile, the millions of Americans who have saved for retirement will see their retirement plans, like 401(k)s, lose their value, robbing retirees of their hard-earned livelihoods.

So the dangers of default are not abstract. Oh, no, this is not some academic argument up there in the clouds. This affects every American family, and we are going to make sure that they hear all about it. The consequences are as real as they get, and the entire world is watching what we do here in Congress.

But, rather than work with Democrats in a productive, constructive way to raise the debt ceiling, the House GOP has immediately resorted to brinksmanship and hostage-taking. They say they will not raise the debt ceiling unless we give in to their demands for draconian spending cuts that would impact just about every American—again, in a very bad way.

Well, I say to my Republican colleagues, if you want to talk about deep cuts, then you have an obligation—an obligation—to show the American people precisely what kind of cuts you are talking about.

Are Republicans going to hold Social Security hostage in exchange for the

debt ceiling or pay raises for our troops or support for veterans or funding for police and fire and first responders or Medicare funding that millions of seniors rely on?

Republicans, you owe the American people answers on what you mean by spending cuts.

Remember, the House rules that the GOP approved are clear. They need to bring a debt ceiling bill to the floor, let the entirety of the House debate it and vote on it, and let the American people see and assess the cuts for themselves.

So, once again, to my House GOP colleagues, if you are serious about spending cuts, show us the math. Show us why you think it is worth risking a global financial crisis just to pass an extremist agenda, because, inevitably, what you are saying are cuts are vital to so many Americans—so many Americans. Being in the majority means that it won't be enough to hide behind time-worn rhetoric about wasteful spending. When it comes to the debt ceiling, the substance counts; the details count; and the consequences are very, very real.

Unless the Republicans can resolve their own chaos and beat back their own extremism, I fear that every day that passes without action on the debt ceiling will increase the risk of default and risk the great harm it will do to the American people. And, should that happen, Americans will see that the fault lies entirely in the hands of the radical GOP.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

#### BORDER SECURITY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the Biden administration has spent 2 years turning its back on the proven tools and policies that Republicans used to strengthen our southern border—2 years of a functionally open borders policy from Washington Democrats and 2 years of chaos and suffering as a result.

Last week, Customs and Border Protection announced that an already recordbreaking year ended on a particularly catastrophic note. Illegal immigration apprehensions clocked an all-time high of more than 2.7 million during the last fiscal year—by far the highest annual total ever recorded. But then December set an astonishing